

MEET YOUR VENDORS ANTHOLOGY

GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

SPECIAL ISSUE WINTER 2015

Your donation directly benefits the vendors.
Please buy only from badged vendors



www.GroundcoverNews.org

Former Groundcover vendors – where are they now?



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

As you get to know the people selling you Groundcover News, you might wonder what has happened to those who went before them. For those of you who are long-time Groundcover News patrons, here is a synopsis of what some of your favorite former vendors are up to now. Unfortunately, a few people lost their battles with substance abuse and have passed away, including **Michael Lawrence** and – rumor has it – **Crystal L.** There are quite a few who simply moved on, but some have let us know their plans and kept in touch.

Many of you will remember **James M.**, who sold Groundcover for four years by the downtown public library. He was a devotee of anime and techno music

and was frequently seen inking stylized tribal drawings, some of which he then embroidered on his jeans. He has been visiting family on and off for the last two years. He has now reconciled with his mother and relocated to live near her in the Lansing area. When he left us, he was determined to obtain his GED and mainstream employment.

We got to know **Rose W.** when she was pregnant and unhoused. She was embraced by Groundcover vendors and then the parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi. As her life stabilized, she and the baby's father established a home for themselves. They subsequently relocated to Florida, where she was reunited with her other children and family.

Danielle M., a frequent columnist for Groundcover who often sold around Liberty Plaza and Washtenaw Community College (WCC), received her Associates Degree in education from WCC and immediately transferred to Eastern Michigan University in pursuit of a teaching degree. She was specializing in special education for the hearing impaired, in part to enable her to help her hearing-impaired brother. At the end of her junior year, Danielle met her future wife and moved with her to Massachusetts and then Oakland, California. Before Danielle could resume work on her degree, her brother passed away. She has been working as a lead sales associate at a national retailer, but recently reacquired her commercial driver's license and anticipates a change soon.

"I'm currently looking at a bunch of driving positions to work while I finish with entry requirements for local law enforcement positions. I have already aced the written tests, passed local and state background checks, and will be taking my physical fitness test around December 16, 2014. Once I finish with the police academy, that should give me enough college credit for my bachelor's, and I intend to work my way up to detective and work on the Special Victims Unit in my department, wherever that may be in California," said Danielle.



James, Rose and Greg are among the vendors who have moved on with their lives.

When we last saw **Ike**, who was best known for selling at Bethlehem UCC and around Main St., he was on his way to help his brother with a home improvement project. We were unable to reach him but hope he is still there, building a new life.

Clayton, known for his cheery disposition while selling near the Farmer's Market and Community High parking lot, is busy running his own pest extermination company and occasionally hawking peanuts around Comerica Park in Detroit.

Greg O., who sold Groundcover News by the People's Food Co-op for a year while he completed his parole, put his many skills to use during that time. He made and sold leather belts and acquired broken-down mopeds and cars, which he fixed up and either used himself or sold. As soon as he was allowed to leave the state, he returned to the hills in the southeast where he reconciled with his family and met his young granddaughter. He returned to Ann Arbor for a few months to build his savings and get his affairs in order before returning to the southeast, where he secured work driving a big rig cross-country. At last report he was feeling successful and loved, or as we so often heard him say, "I'm good. The Lord has blessed me, and I'm good."

After a year or two of sporadically selling Groundcover near Running Fit, **Suzi** got work with a downtown retailer where she has been working full-time

for more than a year. She can be spotted around town with her boyfriend, looking happy.

Tim, who sold Groundcover on and off for about a year at various locations around town, used his earnings to restore his commercial driver's license. He has been driving a cab in the area for the last couple of years and spending time with his daughter.

With her walker surrounded by stuffed animals, **Aimee** often sold papers around Main Street and was a prolific Groundcover writing contributor. She was able to regain most of her mobility and was delighted to have her mother come visit. Eventually, she moved to Iowa to be with her family and re-establish herself.

Matt sold Groundcover in various locations for a couple of years, including Kerrytown, the People's Food Co-op, Washington and Ashley, and Cherry Republic. Known for his fertile imagination, he had plans to build a tiny mobile house. After a recent emergency operation – from which he recovered – he returned to his hometown with his parents.

We at Groundcover are delighted that so many of our vendors have restored their familial relationships and are moving on with their lives. We wish them all joy and contentment this holiday season and for many years to come.

GROUNDCOVER MISSION:

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

Susan Beckett, Publisher
contact@groundcovernews.com

Lee Alexander, Editor
c.lee@groundcovernews.com

Andrew Nixon, Associate Editor

Contributors

Amelia Brown
Sue Budin
George Bryant
La Shawn Courtwright
Shelley Deneve
Peggy Donham
Shelley Deneve
Rissa Haynes
Ian Mark
Kaitlin Schuler
Shawn Story

Letters to the Editor:
editor@groundcovernews.com

Story or Photo Submissions:
submissions@groundcovernews.com

Advertising:
contact@groundcovernews.com

www.groundcovernews.org
facebook.com/groundcover
423 S. 4th Ave, Ann Arbor
734-707-9210

2015 International Network of Street Papers (INSP)

For the first time ever, the international gathering of street newspapers will be in the United States. With the demise of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA), this is a rare opportunity to exchange ideas with colleagues from around the country and the world.

Modern street newspapers got their start in Glasgow, Scotland. They spread throughout Europe and beyond to Australia, Japan, South Korea, Africa and North and South America. With the exception of the 2010 conference

in Australia and the 2006 conference in Montreal, previous INSP conferences were all held in European locations.

All four of the Groundcover vendors who attended the 2011 NASNA conference in Nashville have continued to make significant contributions to the organization as writers, editor, board members and salespeople. They credit the conference with enhancing their skills and confidence, and would very much like to attend the upcoming Seattle conference. Newer vendors and volunteers, too, would like the opportu-

nity to participate in the workshops and learn from their colleagues. We might even present in a workshop ourselves!

While Seattle is far more accessible than Glasgow, it will still be an expensive journey. If you would like to help us get some folks there, you can send us a check (made out to Groundcover News and sent to 423 S. 4th Ave. Ann Arbor, MI, 48103), or donate through PayPal on our website (groundcovernews.org) and include a note that it is for travel to the INSP conference.

Epilepsy led to life on the streets for Miriam, Vendor #6



by Susan Beckett

Originally published December, 2010

Miriam first heard about Groundcover while eating dinner at the Delonis Center. Organizers were trying to determine if there was sufficient interest in starting a street newspaper. She was intrigued. She joined in a photo shoot on her way out, and once her picture

appeared in an ad and on the masthead, her allegiance to Groundcover was cemented.

She quickly embraced the Groundcover mission. "I've been homeless before, and self-esteem is important. I'm blessed, and it's given me more self-esteem," says Miriam. She also values how Groundcover has become a mutually supportive community, and reports she has been "keeping an eye" on another vendor. "He's not a bad person. He just has a drinking problem. This paper's giving him self-esteem and he's doing better, getting help. I'm learning from him how to sell even better."

"I've been selling since issue one, and I like it. I enjoy talking to a variety of people and what it does for the homeless. I'm amazed at the readers' curiosity and anticipation for future issues. Our last issue sold out in two weeks! I'm looking forward to being out there in the rain and sleet. I've got my snowsuit,

umbrella, gloves, boots and laminated sign and I'm happy to do it. I feel Groundcover is my job, so I'm making my own uniform.

"I'm so proud of Groundcover! Each month, out of my own money, I try to add something to my business equipment," Miriam preaches. She has already added a cooler and cart for transporting and protecting her papers, her sign, and Groundcover sweatshirts in a variety of colors she had custom-made for her at Elmo's.

"I am an entrepreneur," Miriam declares – and a self-educated woman. Her last venture was Nawnie's Dog Gone Hot Dogs, named by her grandkids. A loss of peripheral vision – a side-effect of the anti-seizure medication she has taken since infancy – eventually left her legally blind and unable to drive. From 2006 until 2008, she employed a driver to haul her hot dog stand to the U-M Diag area, where she often cleared \$200-300 on a weekend day. Once she no longer had a reliable driver, her hot dog stand was idled, though she still has all her permits and hopes to get it out again.

Diagnosed with epilepsy at birth, Miriam's life normalcy ended after third grade, when she was committed to

Pontiac State Hospital. Epilepsy was considered a mental illness in the 1950s, and no attempt was made to further educate her. Miriam continued her own education by reading the Merriam Webster Dictionary she found in the hospital. There were no educational opportunities, either, when she was transferred to the hospitals in Ionia or Cato, so at 18 she ran away.

She lived on the streets in Saginaw, Oakland County, California, and Pontiac. A man attempted to rob her in Pontiac and she sprayed him with the bleach she carried in a spray bottle for self-protection. She was arrested for felonious assault with an illegal substance and spent seven years in prison. It was during this time that she was declared legally blind and given her first cane. She was released in 2004 to the custody of her daughter, who lives in Washtenaw County and now lives in her own apartment in Ypsilanti, delighting in visits with her grandchildren.

"I want to be successful, and more than anything, I want to see Groundcover be successful," Miriam proclaims, "because it tells the truth. So people should un-harden their hearts. People need to have shelter in all weather, not just when it's colder than 40 degrees."

Rissa Haynes, Groundcover Vendor #8, finds healing with can-do attitude



by Susan Beckett

Originally published October, 2010

Meet Rissa, whose smiling face and offers of "Get your copy of Groundcover!" often greet people on Fourth Avenue on their way to the Farmer's Market or People's Food Co-op. After her smile and warm dark eyes, people notice her

cane, but there is so much more to Rissa than that.

An incurable optimist, she is fighting her way back from a crippling condition brought on by too many hours hunched over a computer. "I go after Moby Dick with my tartar sauce," spouts Rissa, quoting her mentor, motivational speaker Zig Ziglar. "I believe if you tell yourself you can, your brain starts figuring out how to do it, but if you tell yourself you can't, your brain figures out why you can't." Rissa's brain is currently working on establishing her as a corporate trainer or teaching at any level.

Earlier in her life, she graduated from the Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw and headed to MSU, where she majored in Economics on the advice of her counselors, and minored in music education, following her passions for teaching and music. An accomplished pianist, she also played saxophone and sang with every choir she could find.

With no real interest in economics, she left MSU prior to graduation. She got her real estate license and financial planning training and worked in those fields for a while, while she and her family raised her young son. She left for Texas when he was eight and got a job she loved – tutoring at-risk kids. Three of the fourth-to-sixth graders she tutored ultimately got university scholarships. She then tutored adults in transition from laboring to office jobs, and helped them acquire the necessary computer skills. During this time, she received her Microsoft Certification.

Good jobs as a Quality Control Analyst for Texas Instruments and Frito Lay followed, along with returning to school to complete her bachelor's degree. After receiving her B.S. in Technical Management from DeVry University in Richardson, Texas, Rissa started their MBA program.

During this period, several times as she was walking, she fell for no apparent reason. Her condition continued to worsen and eventually she was bound to a wheelchair.

Emergency room doctors assured her

she was not suffering a stroke, but could not explain why she fell. They had her taking 11 medications but had no diagnosis. One evening on her way to a restaurant for lemon chicken, the only parking spot she could find was in front of an office. Rissa noticed that along with the letters DDC, indicating a doctor of chiropractic medicine, were other letters she was unfamiliar with. On a sudden impulse, she entered the office to find out what kind of doctor this was. Her eyes locked onto the posted doctor's quote, "The physicians of the future will not dispense medicines as much as teach patients to live healthily."

The friendly office staff explained that the doctor was also a nutritionist and neurologist and could help her with her problem and did not mind that she did not have insurance. Their x-rays showed that her L4 and L5 vertebrae were crushed, probably because her over-40 body could not handle a string of all-nighters crouched over the computer. Messages from her brain could no longer be smoothly transmitted to her legs.

see CAN-DO, page 13

Vendor #9, Tony S., sees better days ahead

by Susan Beckett

Originally published September, 2010

Chances are you've already met Tony, especially if you got your copy of Groundcover News while heading to your downtown office or strolling to your favorite Main St. restaurant or coffee shop. He and his display cart are downtown fixtures as he greets people and delivers the weather report or chats about the latest Tigers or Lions game. After receiving many requests for directions, he suggested we add a map to the paper to help visitors.

Tony knew he could sell newspapers; he started hawking the Shopping News when he was 11, and by 13 won a trip to Washington, D.C. as a top seller of the Detroit News. His earnings afforded him a new stereo, a bicycle, and a bank account, as well as the chance to buy presents for his Mom – the classic picture of dogs sitting around a poker table playing cards being the one he remembers most fondly.

Always a hard worker, his first encounter with the police came during a blizzard when he was 10 and went out to shovel snow for neighbors. They found him still shoveling 24 hours later. He was a high-spirited boy determined to lead in everything, which sometimes got him in trouble. The 10th of 14 children and the seventh of seven sons, he managed to channel most of his energy into rescuing animals, earning him the nickname "Bird."

Tony was 12 when one of his brothers who had survived a tour in Vietnam



was shot and killed in Detroit. Tony started to drink. When his father died four years later, he drank a lot and got in some serious trouble. He completed his GED in a juvenile detention center and, upon his release, tried returning to high school at Sacred Heart but relapsed into heavy drinking. A farsighted judge sent him to a Washtenaw County recovery program in 1978 as a last chance to stay out of prison.

Tony stayed sober for 25 years. He worked at the Ypsi paper mill for sev-

eral years before relocating and enjoying the economic boom in Texas. There, he found employment as a rod man on a surveying team, then moved into construction, chimney framing, brick and cement work, and landscaping, learning and working his way up until he started his own landscaping business. He recalls dumping the day's grass clippings in the meadow of his cow-raising friend.

"It got so they'd see my truck pull up and 15 or 20 cows would come running right to me."

On a visit to Michigan, he met his future wife, who eventually convinced him to move back north to be close to family. There, he started Tony's Handyman and utilized the skills he'd learned in Texas. His wife eventually left, relieving him from the constant temptation of drinking with her.

He held various jobs, stocking shelves, loading steel and even as a UAW machine operator for a Big Three parts manufacturer, but got laid off when the plant was automated. During this time, he bought a house in Eastpointe and remarried into an instant family of three children, who he still considers his own. The cat he rescued from a

dumpster loyally brought offerings to his door each day, including the memorable day she lined up seven perfect rats, head to toe.

The dark period of his life included buying a second house up north and taking out a loan so his wife could return to school. The economy soured, loan payments soared, and though he worked two jobs, he could not keep up with the payments and eventually lost everything. Despair and drinking led to his wife divorcing him. A neighbor in his rental apartment introduced him to crack at a time when he was desperate to feel good. After a Detroit area treatment facility released him, he was attacked in Detroit while attempting to score more crack.

He returned to the Washtenaw County program where he had sobered up as a teen, and was greeted like an old friend. He was directed to a three-quarter house where he could live for three months in a substance-free environment. He slept a lot and did little but it was not until his three months were nearly over that he finally went to the hospital and learned he had emphysema and pneumonia.

The Delonis Center afforded him three more months of shelter and a sleeping bag to use when he left. Tony's ditty from this time goes,

see BETTER DAYS, page 13

Meet Lonnie Baker, Vendor #99



by Susan Beckett

Originally published February, 2013

His ever-present, wide smile and dancing brown eyes invite you in when Lonnie suggests you buy Groundcover News.

He says, "Working for Groundcover has been a wonderful experience, and I

want to thank everyone involved, from the editor to the printer to the other vendors, and foremost, the wonderful customers who stop to speak to you every day, letting you know they care.

"The money I make enables me to pay rent and have a somewhat normal life. I use it to buy hygiene items, household basics, and an occasional cup of coffee or meal out. My Bridge Card (food stamps) only lasts me a couple of weeks. This cuts down on the number of meals I have to eat at Delonis. I made a lot of friends with the other vendors, too."

Lonnie grew up in Detroit and came to Washtenaw County in 1983. He worked an assortment of jobs, even after becoming visually impaired at the age of 27. Eventually, he recognized it was dangerous for him to continue working as a machine operator in a plastic mold injection plant and left. He transitioned from part-time to full-time in his side job working at the In and Out store on

East University in Ann Arbor, where he did a bit of everything: running the cash register to stocking shelves, cleaning, and working security. The store manager used Lonnie's capability to keep the student employees on their toes.

"My man, Lonnie, he can run this store all by himself," Lonnie recalls the manager saying to the students when they all returned from the Christmas break.

Lonnie turned to temporary jobs after his time at In and Out. One he remembers fondly is cleaning out the ovens at Zingerman's, back when they had only the Detroit Street location.

Lonnie has taken some business courses that he hopes will one day help him run his own company. An idea man, Lonnie thought of flavored popcorn and vitamin gum long ago, but others brought them to market before he

could. He is currently developing ideas for phone apps.

"I ain't perfect but I pray every day," says Lonnie, commenting that he became Christian in 1999. "I never sold a paper without saying a prayer first."

"I don't think like I used to think," Lonnie muses. He adds that he is now more compassionate, sincere, and respectful.

That change paid great dividends around the holidays. He received a special Christmas present from June at St. Mary's Student Parish. From Pavel, who has become a friend, he received boots, top-quality long underwear, and thermal socks – just what he needed to stay warm.

Lonnie says that the Best of Groundcover Anthology was another present, and, "I think you should print it every year!"

Changing our attitudes can change our lives



by **La Shawn Courtwright**
Groundcover Vendor #56

Originally published August, 2011

When you get fed-up with how things have been going in your life, then maybe you should change your attitude, and I've decided to do just that. Yeah, I know it seems like if it's not one thing, it's another. I am one of those prime examples of this saying. My old attitude has taken me on a journey that has had plenty of bumps and hurdles to get

over. Vicissitudes shape your life.

I am taking the opportunity, while I'm still able, to modify my reactions and responses to curtail any hardships. We avoid things sometimes; although we want change, we are fearful of the unknown. My past is an old form, and my future is taking on a new shape. I find that this transformation I'm making has given me a renewed confidence I was lacking before. It seemed easier to accept what I was used to dealing with rather than branching out with my own ideas. I used to feel like I'd already failed before I attempted any

project. That attitude, itself, confirmed defeat. I approach things with surety now. In this, I accept that change – the changes I want to see – will come eventually. We oftentimes have too-great expectations, instead of honoring the subtle outcome of our efforts. It's when we begin to do this that we surmount.

I took on a very negative posture in some areas of my life, and not only did

it affect me, it caused devastation for my dearest, closest loved ones. I keep this in mind to remind me and keep me from those behaviors. For I can clearly see how they only kept me in bondage, furthering my despair.

I'm very grateful to all of those who offered me good advice. Yet, there are two special friends of mine who stand out. They bore with me and hung in there. They did not say to me what I wanted to hear; they told me what needed to be said.

Mrs. Florence Allen has always encouraged, praised, and continues to believe in me. Mrs. Allen was a pioneer of the Mary Kay Cosmetics and Beauty Products business with Mary Kay herself. They did this during a time when people did not believe that women had the ingenuity to successfully run a business. She did not let that stop her, and she's still going strong today and is an outstanding director in the business of Mary Kay.

Mrs. Melissa Duncan, owner of The Cleaning Goddesses, afforded me many chances when I was at what seemed like the end of my rope. She gives me good old straight talk, no matter how hard the pill is to swallow. Mrs. Duncan told me how she worked hard at starting her business. She never gave up no matter what came up, even if it meant to go

and do the job herself.

I think these women know me better than I know myself. I love them and all of the people who did not let me off of the hook or turn their backs on me. These women are excellent examples of how having the right attitude can change your life.

I also cannot forget to thank Sandy Schmoker, who was there when I first arrived at Groundcover News. I read some of my writings to her and she had encouraging feedback. Coming from an educator, her words are highly esteemed. Rissa Haynes and Susan Beckett warmly welcomed me to Groundcover News, too. I was so overwhelmed with emotion. I literally had a tearful moment. These were tears of joy, though. This was my first day and it happened that there was a Groundcover News meeting that evening. I left to go run a couple more remaining errands and I was inspired to write the "Voice" piece. I've always had a voice and an attitude. I now have a positive vessel, Groundcover News, for my voice with a new attitude. When I read the "Voice" piece at the meeting later that day and Susan Beckett asked me to e-mail my writing to her, it sparked a light in me. I began to feel my self-worth again. I already know my life has been changed because of you all and Groundcover News. THANK YOU!

Miriam takes on Social Security

by **Susan Beckett**

Originally published October, 2012

(What follows is but a snippet from the adventures of Groundcover vendor Miriam's life, which she hopes will one day be recorded in a book. Any author interested in working with Miriam should contact Groundcover.)

Miriam wanted this article published because, "I want people to know how the system fabricates and handles situations that they don't want to deal with. For seven years, I told them and explained my situation but they demanded proof. Now that I got the proof, they are procrastinating and wasting time, hoping I'll die."

Miriam has been suing the Social Security Administration for payments from her father's social security following his death, as she was his only disabled child. She was known to the system since she had applied for Social Security disability at the age of 22, four years after she escaped from Caro State Hospital. The courts have already ruled in her favor on four out of the five steps to proving her claim, and the remaining step hinges on proving that she was still

disabled during the four years when she was on the run, fearing a return to the hospitals that had kept her prisoner for the previous decade.

Miriam's odyssey began long ago when she suffered a series of Grand Mal seizures at the age of seven. They left her unconscious and hospitalized with little chance for recovery. Though she did awaken after several days, her brain, already beset with epilepsy, had suffered further damage that affected her ability to control her emotions.

After several run-ins at school, she was taken from the third grade and sent to Pontiac State Mental Hospital where she received no further education and was diagnosed as "incurable." Miriam had health insurance through her father's company and she believes the hospital kept her, in large part, because of the payments it was receiving. Among the bizarre and damaging experiences she had was being prescribed cigarettes at the age of 12 while she was a patient at Pontiac.

She attempted escape from Pontiac, and from Ionia (to which she was transferred at age 12, while it was a hospital

for the criminally insane) and finally successfully fled from Caro. Miriam lived on the streets and survived as best she could with no identity papers and only a third-grade education, on top of a gripping fear that she would be caught and returned to yet another institution. She was in contact with her mother, who arranged for a family friend, Mr. Harris, to bring her Dilantin, the drug she depended on for suppressing her epilepsy attacks.

The Social Security Administration claimed that during those four years she had healed, and was therefore not a continuously disabled child entitled to survivor benefits. Miriam persisted until she found a good lawyer to take on her case. When he first filed in December of 2011, he was told it would take six to 18 months to get a hearing. Meanwhile, Miriam tracked down Mr. Harris, who swore in an affidavit that he had continuously provided her with Dilantin during that time. She further procured testimony from a renowned doctor from the University of Michigan that the kind of damage evident in her brain could not have gone away. When these documents were recently present-

ed to the court, they were told that there were still 18 months worth of cases ahead of Miriam's.

In Miriam's initial attempt to rectify the situation seven years ago, she represented herself before a judge in Texas with whom she communicated over a flat-screen television. He told her he was setting her case aside and that when it was recalled, he wanted her to have a lawyer, because she had a good case and stood to recover 40 years of back pay.

"Most people would give up on something like this," says Miriam. "What they don't realize is that I have nothing to lose. They never thought I'd keep playing with these papers."

"Do the right thing," Miriam urges the Social Security Administration. "If the shoe were on the other foot, you'd force me to do the right thing. Now, you do the right thing."

(Note: Miriam has since won her final case and is awaiting a final judicial review as of November, 2014.)

Meet Peggy Donham, Vendor #98, the face of Groundcover at the PFC

by Amelia Brown
U-M Student Contributor

Originally published April, 2014

A: Peggy, how long have you been with Groundcover?

P: I have been with Groundcover since the spring of 2012.

A: Where do you sell, and on what days? How do you decide where to sell?

P: I sell at the People's Food Co-op. I sell there because under the Groundcover policy, if you sell 800 papers a month and a corner is available, then I can get what's called a corner card. What that affords me is that if another vendor is selling at the Co-op, and I came there, they would have to leave. So I have top rights to sell there. The reason I did that is because the Co-op has supported Groundcover for, I'm thinking maybe almost the four years since Groundcover has been in existence, with a dollar-off coupon. The general public that tends to go there tends to be more aware of the homeless community and people who are low-income, and we get a lot of support at that spot. When I knew the person who had the corner before me was leaving permanently, I made a real effort to sell more papers to get that spot, to allow me to keep doing this.

I also sell papers at St. Mary's Student Parish on Sundays. I've been doing that as long as I have been a Groundcover vendor, every Sunday.

A: So the corner card is a good incentive to sell more papers, then?

P: Oh, yes.

A: What does your average day look like when you are selling?

P: I have tried to start my day between 7:00 and 7:30 at the Co-op, just because I am a morning person and I like being there. I usually get done between 1:00 and 3:00, and that depends on what is going on at the Farmers Market. Saturday is a really busy day because that market goes on all year, and that affects the number of customers coming to the Co-op. Most of the time, I work Tuesday through Sunday – Tuesday through Saturday I'm at the Co-op. Sometimes I don't make it that early depending on how I'm feeling, but that's what I try to maintain as my routine.

A: How did you find out about Groundcover, and what made you decide to get involved?

P: I think it was the first year they were



up and running, I had met a vendor whose spot was at Liberty and Main. Over time I got to know him and talked to him about it, and there came a point where I knew I wanted to do some type of job. I retired from working at the Veteran's Hospital in 2001. I had worked there for 13 years; so, I knew that on top of that income I needed a little bit more. I would talk to this vendor about it, and it seemed great because you could work whenever you wanted. That's how I initially got into it.

A: What was something you found challenging when you first started at Groundcover, and how did you overcome that?

P: Because of the population that does do this work there are issues, and I'm including myself; issues like addiction, homelessness, inability to know how to work out problems, whatever they may be, etc. That's my biggest issue.

A: When you first started selling papers, was it hard to figure out how to approach people?

P: It's very hard for me, because my tendency or technique is either saying good morning, saying hello, things like that. If you're going to engage with me beyond that I'll talk to you, maybe the paper will come into it, maybe it won't. Sometimes people that I do engage with already know about us and think "Oh, I'll buy a paper." But I'm really not comfortable with approaching people who haven't made eye contact with me. I think about how I feel when somebody approaches me and how would I want somebody to behave if they were selling something or asking for money. There are vendors that are – I don't want to say aggressive, but their technique is different. I couldn't do it.

A: Has the whole process taught you anything about yourself?

P: It has, in the fact that I think Greg

and Susan have seen in me the ability to help other vendors that are new. I feel like I'm in a good comfort zone when I'm dealing with other vendors. I just kind of relay my experience, and my understanding of how to sell. I try to focus on helping them not to get discouraged. It's pretty easy to get caught up in "Oh, I only made five dollars today," but I try to tell them, well, that's five dollars more than you had in your pocket when you got up this morning; as people got to know me, my income increased. I like that. We had gone to EMU to talk to a class of social work students, and I like that, too. I like talking to smaller groups of people and letting them know my history with Groundcover, my experience with it. Myself and another vendor went and talked before the Ypsilanti Township Board about us possibly selling in Ypsi Township, and I liked that too. It makes me feel like I'm using a little more of my brain, and makes me feel good about myself just doing it, because I consider myself smart. I feel like I've grown in more ways than I even anticipated by being involved in the paper; aside from the money, I think that I have gotten way more that is not tangible. I know that. That's what makes me feel good about what I do.

A: What have been some of your most significant moments as a vendor?

P: I guess what stands out to me is when somebody speaks positively about me to the Groundcover staff. That stands out because I always think, "Why would you do that?" I understand, but that's a hard path for me to cross. It has helped push my issues aside, like sometimes if I get a big tip I feel uncomfortable. I've even said to people that were kind to me around the holidays, "No, you don't have to do that." I think it's the feeling that I don't deserve that, so that's been quite significant for me. It has pinpointed some issues that I was not paying attention to dealing with. I think the significance

overall is the kindness of the people in this community, and that has been overwhelming. Overwhelming in a good way. A lady who was a parishioner at the church, who gave me \$5 or more every Sunday, she brought me a present this year. I like to draw, and haven't gotten the chance to do that in a long time, and the parish knows that. She got me a pad of art paper, a really nice pencil set, great wool socks, and disposable foot heaters. That is the thing that has really stood out – the overall kindness of people. There are a lot of people that go above and beyond "Hi, how are you, let me buy a paper." They really have a vested interest in you as a vendor. That's been the most outstanding thing to me.

A: How has your life changed since you became involved in Groundcover? Could you give us a "before" and "after" picture?

P: Before, it was really hard to make ends meet on the income that I had. I was renting an efficiency in Ann Arbor, and it probably took all but \$100 of my money each month to pay for that. Which was fine, but since then I have gotten into affordable housing which is for low-income people. So I was able to get on a waiting list and move in, but it took a couple years. I am less worried about the bills I have to pay now, and a lot of that has to deal with where I'm living and what I pay for rent. I think it's changed my life in more ways than I thought it would, like being involved in the community.

A: What do you wish people knew about you?

P: Probably that I am trying to do a job. I have no problem if you tell me no or yes, but I do want to project that I am doing what I feel is an honest job, and most of us are just trying to work out what we need for our lives. And I would like to project that I am really a decent person. People are going to throw you into any kind of assumptions, and I'm not out to prove that I'm not what they think I am. I do get a lot of questions from customers; probably about 25 percent have asked me, "What do you do if you think these vendors are going out and drinking or doing drugs?" And they think that with panhandlers too. But we tend to get thrown into that part of our community. I would hope that anyone would give a vendor a fair chance. I think overall I just want people to know we are decent people just trying to do a job.

Visit our website, www.groundcovernews.org, to read the unabridged interview.

Meet James (Joe), Vendor #103, salesman extraordi-

by Susan Beckett

Originally published September, 2012

James has been selling since the age of 18, when he left Ypsilanti for California and went door-to-door selling a cleaning product called Advantage. For seven years he traveled the United States and Mexico, moving product in all but six states and learning to stand on his own.

"I don't indulge in a lot of stuff like I did then," James reflects. "I learned the hard way not to pitch my money away on stupid stuff. I've matured a lot. It helped me to become a man, knowing that Mom is a thousand miles away and can't just come over and bail me out of a jam."

He eventually settled in North Carolina and worked for a data survey company, Neighborhood Solutions. James went door-to-door talking with residents about proposed changes in their neighborhoods and soliciting their opinions and feedback on how improvements should be made. He also sold the *Winston-Salem Journal*.

With all that experience, it's no surprise that James quickly became one of the top earners when he returned to Ypsilanti and began selling Groundcover.



His stay here is temporary, as his jobs in North Carolina and his girlfriend and her children await his return.

James returned to Michigan at the request of his mother, who was in a car accident five years ago. Her health has been declining ever since. James came back early in 2010 to take care of her and make sure she was able to get to her medical appointments and get the treatment she needed.

He got a job selling windows when he

first arrived but got laid off during the recession. Selling Groundcover fits his experience, needs and personality. He sets his own hours so he can make his mom's needs his top priority and still pay for his own expenses and help his mom out. He's also saving to help with back-to-school expenses for his girlfriend's children.

James says about selling, "You have people who are familiar and some who are unfamiliar with Groundcover. I like running into those who are unfamiliar.

I can get the word out that Groundcover is about real-life stuff and talks about important issues like poverty. I think people around here are proud of their community and want to know what is going on here.

"A couple of people have come back and actually thanked me, because it's a good paper and they never would have found it if I hadn't taken the time to tell them about it. It's also an opportunity to help people have a better day. Maybe I can say something that will spark them, or they will say something so I'll have a better day!

"People aren't as mean as Americans perceive them to be. There are a lot of nice, kind-hearted people out there, from young to old. I sell to teenagers, too," says James.

The health of James' mother is improving and he hopes to be back in North Carolina by the end of the year, though Ypsilanti will always be his home, too. He and his mom are starting a T-shirt business. James took a silk screen printing course a few years back and intends to print the shirts in North Carolina, but the headquarters might well be in Ypsilanti. If James is doing the selling, we know those T-shirts will go fast!

James "Joe" Woods, Vendor #103, always workin' it

by Amelia Brown

U-M Student Contributor

Originally published May, 2014

Like many of the vendors who currently work for Groundcover, James Woods (or Joe, as we all know him) brings a unique personality to the organization. As I adjust the video camera and read over my interview questions, Joe flicks through texts and missed calls on his cell phone, always busy and always social. Joe has been with Groundcover for nearly three years and has become one of the strong foundations of the organization. His penchant for lighthearted jokes and lively gestures fills both the office and his selling spots with energy; when you meet Joe, you will know it.

Joe's personal style is one of the factors that make him such a successful vendor for Groundcover. In his words, "I just go out there and do my thing." He mainly sells the \$10 special edition papers, which is a risky move because they are more expensive, but Joe seems to have no problem racking up sales. When I inquired about his tendency to only sell the more pricey papers, Joe explains:

"I have been in sales since age 18. There are certain things I have been trained to do, so a \$10 paper is nothing. Other vendors may think, '\$10 for a paper! Oh no, that's too much,' but not me. That's just not my mentality."

This statement in itself reveals quite a bit about Joe. He is hardworking, driven, and always up for a challenge.

Many new ideas for Groundcover come from Joe, and he is working tirelessly to make them a reality. One of his more recent concepts is a \$20 paper, a sort of "special" special edition, if you will. Joe says, "If I can get a paper for \$100, I'll sell it." In addition to brewing up new business ventures, Joe is involved with Groundcover in a variety of ways. He has been through the Groundcover Money Management program, has received a certificate from the University of Michigan to teach HIV/AIDS Awareness through Groundcover, and also acts as a mentor for new vendors. Mentorship is key for Joe, as he views the success of Groundcover as dependent on each vendor.

"I'm trying to get to where everybody in Groundcover is making money. So,

I'm doing little things to try and help other vendors with their sales pitch," he says. "Sometimes I have them shadow me and see what I'm doing, or I'll shadow them and critique them... at the end of the day, the bottom line is numbers. If everybody is selling papers, everybody is making money, and everybody is happy."

Joe certainly has a wealth of knowledge to share with new vendors in terms of his sales tactics, which I have seen firsthand. Before my personal involvement with Groundcover, Joe was a familiar face to me. His presence on the corner of Main and Liberty reaches outwards across the street and is hard to miss. As Joe says:

"I like messing with people. And they like it, too, because you never know what type of day a person is having. You never know if a woman just got into it with her husband, or if the baby just got sent to the hospital, or somebody recently passed away. If a person doesn't buy a paper, I'll still say 'Have a great day!' or 'God bless!' and that might turn that person's day around."

Joe's approach to selling papers for

Groundcover is friendly, professional, and perceptive. One of his main mottos is that you can never take the "no's" personally. "You have to brush it off," he insists. "Give them a 'Have a good one' and just keep going."

Brushing off the "no's" is extremely important, as they frequently occur. Part of this is due to the fast-paced lifestyle of our society. In the five or six seconds that it takes for a person to walk by a vendor, there is not much time to convey what the organization is all about. If given the time, this is what Joe told me he would want each passerby to know about Groundcover:

"What it stands for. It's not just a paper. A lot of people know Groundcover as 'the homeless paper,' and I'm trying to get it to where it's not 'the homeless paper,' it's a paper helping people who want to help themselves. Most of the people who sell Groundcover are not homeless. We have places that we live, and we have bills to pay. And this paper is paying those bills for me and other vendors out there. I don't get a check a

see **WORKIN' IT**, page 13

Shawn benefits as FUSE saves money and lives

by Shawn Story
Groundcover Vendor #42
and Kaitlin Schuler
U-M Student Contributor

Originally printed August, 2014

Think about the last time you treated a chronic medical condition with medication that required refrigeration or adherence to a precise schedule. What if you needed a device like an air filter or sleep apnea machine, and you had no electricity and no way to maintain a regular schedule? A trip to the emergency room in the throes of something like an asthma attack or diabetic coma is likely.

Now, imagine that trip repeating itself over and over again, in a span of a few months. Imagine getting stuck in “the revolving door of crisis services,” as the Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County (CSS) puts it. This is reality for many high-risk and low-income adults, but the Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE) project has arrived in Ann Arbor to make this a much-less-common occurrence.

FUSE aims to combine housing, care management and health services to improve the quality of life for high-risk adults in the community. Users of FUSE are often referred to FUSE’s services by the homeless shelters or emergency rooms that they frequent. Through the program, these people receive the healthcare they need, along with housing and other care management.

In order to find those who needed



caught in the repetitive and draining cycle of hospitals, rehabilitation, and lack of housing. CSH also funds similar programs in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the state of Connecticut, in hopes that these pilot programs will lead to lasting success across the country.

One of our vendors can speak personally to the success of FUSE. Shawn Story has been a Groundcover vendor for years, and he wanted to tell readers about the help FUSE has provided to him. Here is his story, in his own words:

Hi, my name is Shawn Story. I am from Inkster. I've been homeless for 12 years, and a Groundcover vendor for almost four years. I was approached last year by Diana Clifford from the FUSE program about how FUSE

was helping out people that go to the emergency room a lot. Being a diabetic on the streets is a hard task, and being in an unstable environment, I was always passing out and ending up in the ER. I have not been to the emergency room now that I'm in the housing that FUSE helped me to get a few months ago.

My outstanding worker, Molly Madden, has done miracles in my life by getting me housing, bus passes, furniture, and rides to away appointments. For all of the places I looked for help, there has not been anyone that has been able to do

what FUSE has done for me. I'm now a better person, and am involved in the community and in being a vendor for Groundcover. My future goals are going back to school and getting my [driver's] license, so the donations I receive from selling Groundcover really do go towards a good cause. FUSE helped give me hope that I could be healthy again.

There are many other stories out there like Shawn's. While helping high-risk people in the short term, FUSE also aims to reduce long-term costs of healthcare by frequent users of hospitals, in terms of insurance, ambulance rides, and actual hospital visits. The primary goal is for FUSE participants to achieve housing stability, while also managing their health.

FUSE could not achieve their goals without the cooperation of many sectors of society, from hospitals to housing providers. CSS provides many of the supportive services with FUSE, in cooperation with others, such as the University of Michigan Hospital, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, and Huron Valley Ambulance. Housing partners include Avalon Housing, Ann Arbor Housing Commission, Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, Washtenaw Prisoner Re-entry, Michigan Ability Partners, and the Washtenaw Housing Alliance. Integrated health services and evaluation services also play a key role in achieving FUSE's goals.

FUSE may be a pilot program, but it has already changed the lives of many in Washtenaw County.

My bowl

by Elizabeth A. Kurtz, aka “Lit”
Groundcover Vendor #159

Originally published November, 2013

Specs of phlegm dot the walkway onto the church where daily breakfast is served for the homeless. I spot one, and upon a second encounter I am barely able to suppress my urge to gag. The cold, frigid February air is a foe to the lungs and charges them with more exertion to survive than is somehow natural. Soon I am sitting across the table from two men who may have just released the sputum and are now beginning to consume a bowl of oatmeal or grits. I look at my own bowl of oatmeal with cinnamon and raisins and dig into the sweetness the mixture has created. There is a syrupy sensation on my tongue and the flavor of chewy raisins produces its own taste experience.

This is a flavor that I have come to enjoy more and more over the course



of several months – oatmeal being one of the only gems that has survived the turmoil I have encountered recently. I cling to my morning bowl of oatmeal with tenacity for my emotional and my physical survival. I have conversations with the volunteer servers about my own oatmeal-cooking abilities as though I am discussing a long-lost friend that I have been separated from

for too long. I describe the cooking process in detail: the slow heating of the water on the stovetop that gradually becomes a raging boil; the texture of the steel-cut oats; the twenty-some minutes of simmering that allows me to organize and gather

my thoughts like flowers from a wild imaginary field that will present me a bouquet of focus at my table as I eat them slowly and plan my day.

Then, as now, my bowl of oatmeal is my private sanctuary that brings order, peace, and calmness to me during an

otherwise unpredictable existence. Despite this, I charge into the church late most mornings, savoring and dreading the fleeting moments that determine if I am still in time for that bowl. Most people have already finished their breakfasts and are quietly annoyed at my lack of promptness. I am annoyed at myself as well, since I know that my oatmeal bowl helps sustain my spiritual equilibrium.

I request my own special bowl type, a variety of bowl that reminds me of the style of dishes I served from my own table. I pull up a seat at the communal breakfast table and take time to catch up on chitchat with members of my new community, or plan for musical interludes after breakfast. Although I have overstayed my time and am soon whisked away with the others, my bowl of oatmeal has given me the power and confidence that I need to start the uncertain day.

Robert's difficult journey to Groundcover Vendor #17



by Susan Beckett

Originally published June, 2012

Groundcover News vendor Robert Salo's art communicates complex ideas he has trouble articulating verbally. Although Robert has worked in every conceivable medium, currently he uses found objects from around town to create what he calls "Street Art."

"I create this to leave an impression," Robert says. "It's sort of like a time-capsule or a hope chest. I call this particular set of work [he gestures to a nearby installment] *2010 Impressions*. It's the mediums I gather that inform the message."

Robert says his ambition to create stems largely from one influential teacher, Mr. Fox at Farmington High School, who in the early 1970s led him toward a serious interest in graphic arts. Because of Fox, Robert says that he has a practical approach to art.

"I try to make my art three-dimensional and real to life, like you're actually there," Robert says. "I try not to be too surrealist. I wanted to be unique as an artist and an individual, so I learned to humble myself and to just be patient."

In the early 1980s, Robert headed to the west coast to spend a year studying mountaineering in California with Dave Smith, a seasoned climber and instructor. He worked in the kitchen at Yosemite National Park for a time. "They called me *The Count of Monte Cristo*," he joked, "because I had to count the sandwiches."

It was at Yosemite that Robert met the famed nature photographer Ansel Adams, in 1984, the same year the artist died.

"I was at the park, heading over to the health clinic when I saw a man that looked like Santa Claus," he says. Robert introduced himself and asked for an autograph. Adams was filming a biographical documentary about his life, but stopped to speak with him.

"I asked him, 'What is it that you try to capture in your work?' As he was signing the autograph for me he said, 'Robert, it is so hard to verbalize,' and that was all he said."

Alongside art, Robert's second passion is for mass-media and newspapers. He attributes this interest to another high school teacher, Ms. Gruenberg. She persuaded him to study hard and he felt at the time that he would likely have a career in news. "She was somebody that just brought out the best in me," he says.

After graduating from Farmington High School in 1974, Robert considered joining the military. His dream at the time was to be an aviator, a dream he still hasn't put completely to rest. "I still have an ambition to fly, but I think it's probably beyond me now," he says.

Instead of joining the service, Robert moved to Flint where he worked at a local newspaper as the circulation manager. At the same time he studied computer programming at Mott Community College, but soon his interest in programming waned. Robert

is now planning to return to Eastern Michigan University soon to study computer-aided graphic design.

Selling Groundcover helps Robert supplement his modest income, but it also allows him to interact and socialize with new people.

"Groundcover helped me to find myself again," he says. "I like being myself and meeting different people. I've gathered a lot of history about Ann Arbor, just talking to all of the people. I like it when they leave with a smile."

We spark things.

We believe in dignity first, and that every 1 matters. We support programs, like Groundcover News and Independent Development Accounts, that help people help themselves. We believe we can change the world, 1 at a time.

...be 1 who Matters to 1 who Matters.

/1matters on or

GROUNDCOVER NEWS ADVERTISING RATES

Size	Black and White	Color	Approx. Size
Business card	\$49.95	\$65.95	2 X 3.5
1/8	\$89.95	\$129.95	2.5 X 6.5 or 5 X 3.25
1/6	\$129.95	\$165.95	4.5 X 5.5
1/4	\$159.95	\$215.95	5 X 6.5
1/2	\$299.95	\$399.95	5 X 14 or 10 X 6.5
Full Page	\$495.95	\$669.95	10 X 14

PACKAGE PRICING

Three Months/Three Issues: 15% off

Six Months/Six Issues: 25% off

Full Year/Twelve Issues: 35% off

Additional 20% off ads with coupons

Justice or not

by Peggy Donham
Groundcover Vendor #98

Originally published November, 2014

I want to share a very private situation in my life that I have been dealing with for these past few months. I've disclosed this only to a few close friends, in part, because I feel ashamed and embarrassed about what has happened to me. And I want to believe it's not my fault, but I can't help but feel it is.

I think if you have some knowledge of my history you may understand the emotions and feelings I've felt while I go through this situation. I've spent the past 26 years in and out of therapy, dealing with a childhood filled with incest, rape, abuse and molestation. From three years old, through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood I've suffered repeated abuses. Sharing my story, my hope is that you understand my frustration with the judicial system. And most important, in some way my story may help other people in similar situations.

On what seemed a normal day selling Groundcover News at the People's Food Co-op, as I do most days of the week, I was sweeping the sidewalk and picking up trash, with my back turned to a man I know – a man who has a history of being an alcoholic on a daily basis – who walked up behind me. He then pinched my butt and rubbed his hand up and down my leg and behind many times. I turned around, very angry, holding the broom in my hand, and I told him if he didn't get away from me I would hit him with the broom.

I wanted to hit him, but I didn't. He was more intoxicated than usual and said "I was just saying good morning." At this point, many emotions erupted from my past. My face and head felt hot, and all I was thinking was, "protect yourself."

When I'm in an extreme emotional place like this, it's painful and very difficult to calm my emotions. As if every emotional nerve was firing, my anxiety level was high, and I was afraid of having an anxiety attack. For over an hour afterward, I felt tormented with anger and past emotions of helplessness. I thought I needed to do something, yet I felt frozen by my emotions. A friend helped me out of this petrified place, telling me calling the police would be a positive action.

After explaining to the police what happened, the man was charged by the prosecuting attorney's office with fourth degree sexual assault.

Then came the court date. I was very nervous and anxious entering the courtroom. I thought he would be charged and sentenced with the original charge, but I was in for an awakening I didn't see coming. While I waited, a woman from Safe House introduced herself and told me she had to be in another courtroom during my case and would not be available. Then I was taken to a small room of the courtroom with the prosecuting attorney, the detective from the case, and a woman who worked for the prosecutor. He asked me, what did I want to happen? I said, "I want him to be accountable for his actions."

It was then that the prosecutor took ten minutes to explain that I needed to consider that the original charge could cause a long, drawn-out court trial that could end in this man being found not guilty of any charge; that he would have

to register as a sex offender and how difficult it would be for him to get a job or housing. As I sat there, I felt my anger rise, completely alone and backed into a corner with no choice but to agree to a lesser charge of assault and

battery. I felt completely powerless in a situation I counted on feeling powerful in.

Sitting in the courtroom afterward, listening to the judge speak to this man, tears ran down my face. The more I tried not to cry, the more tears I had. I felt that the only thing I could do was run from that courtroom. Needless to say, I left very disappointed.

I struggle with my emotions around this. I'm angry with the prosecuting attorney, the detective, Safe House, the court system, and sadly, myself. I know my residual feelings go deeper than just this one incident. I understand I had a choice, but it felt as if I had no choice but to go along with what the prosecuting attorney persuaded me to believe.

It was difficult for me to expose myself by revealing what happened to me. I'm embarrassed this happened, and I struggle with feeling angry towards myself, because I want to believe this wasn't my fault. My hope is that my article may help someone who reads this.

"Sharing my story, my hope is that you understand my frustration with the judicial system."

Even When

by La Shawn Courtwright
Groundcover Vendor #56

Originally published December, 2011

Dedicated to my Grandmother, Sylvania, who never threw her Christmas tree out until the 12 days of Christmas were over.

Even when you've given your Love to those who
taste it, touch it, live it, do it, act-out-of-it, -in -Love,
All you give is Love.

Even when that something, someone, somehow wills
you to derail,
off your own tracks,

Even when life just happens,

Let no-thing or any-thing,

Take the Love,

You Own!

Even when they just won't accept you.

You just go on and Love,

Love to forgive

Forgive,

To Love!

Christmas to me means,

the beginning,

the pursuit by acts

of good will

for all!

Outsider

by La Shawn Courtwright
Groundcover Vendor #56

Originally published August, 2014

I'm an outsider
Cause er'thing I do
is on the outside

Jus like when I think
it's on the outside

Even if I drink
I'm on the brink
of the outside

When I tell people
What's on my mind
It's on the outside

My life
I have lived it
on the outside

My goals and dreams
linger
on the outside

Even my writing's
on the outside

More so
my poetry
speaks
to the outside

My destiny
is on the outside
of what some people
thought it would be

I'm so outside my mind
that that's where I'm free

Outside of you only
from the inside
to the outside
that's what makes
me, me

Outsiders are not conformist
and constrained by society
I live
the outsider
liberty
OUTSIDE!

Outside, too

by Elizabeth S. Kurtz, aka Lit
Groundcover Vendor #159

Originally published November, 2014

Hi La Shawn,

Just wanted to let you

Know that I feel I have lived

Outside most of my life, too.

Being the only girl child placed me

Well outside of my family circle;

The rules of a patriarchy

Eclipsed my spirit at an early age

Placing me on the outside of my own emotions.

You know as well as do I that living outside is no place for growth

And so I didn't.

Later I lived outside of friendships

Somehow lacking the social cues to meaningfully connect

When it mattered.

I feel ya Girl!

Do you feel me?

A few years ago

I began to find my way

Inside for the first time.

Once inside I looked around

My spirit and soul

I liked what I saw on the inside, I began to grow

For the first time even thrive

And then I woke up one

Morning on the outside again.

This time

Living in my car

I am on the outside now

Working my way back inside

But my life outside somehow

Strengthens my spirit inside.

Living on the outside

Ain't all bad

If you can cope.

Stay in touch —

Lit

Anonymous Homeless

Originally published August, 2014

Hello. My name isn't important.

I am homeless.

I am homeless because I am an addict,
because I am an alcoholic, because my
wife died and I went into a deep depres-
sion. I am homeless because I was laid
off, because I am physically and mental-
ly handicapped. I am homeless because
of a course of unfortunate events that
left me blurry, afraid, and confused. I
am homeless through no fault of my
own. I worked hard, tried my best —
but somehow still found myself on the
streets.

The reason I am homeless isn't as im-
portant as the fact that I am homeless.
That is the present, that is the here and
now, that is the reality of it. I sleep on
sidewalks, in doorways, in alleys, and
in the woods. I eat leftovers that people
give me as they walk by or someone
might buy me a sandwich. Handouts at
the shelter or a church and sometimes
trash can keep me fed.

I wasn't always homeless. I used to work
in a factory, a hospital, a restaurant, or
even an art gallery. I used to be a chef, a
nurse, a teacher or the manager of some
store. I was someone's father, mother,

sister, brother, husband, wife, friend,
companion.

Now, though, I am homeless. I haven't
had a real job in a while, except for the
work I pick up every now and then
sweeping a sidewalk or cleaning win-
dows. I can make a buck or two by sing-
ing a song for you as you walk by on
your way to work or the store; maybe
offering you the local street paper as
you pass, or just begging some spare
change.

I never thought this would be me, that
this would become my life. But it has,
and that's that. I am homeless in Ann
Arbor.

Editor's note: *The author, George Bryant
Vendor #179, has been with Ground-
cover for four months. He was one of the
campers whose tents and belongings were
bulldozed at Broadway Park by Amtrak
workers at the behest of the Michigan
Department of Transportation (MDOT).
They had nowhere else to go; Mercy
House was willing to let them camp on
their property, but the city told them they
could only camp there for a night. As one
of the campers put it, "I'm going to live
for more than one night."*

Incurable optimist has hope on her side

by Rissa Haynes
Groundcover Vendor #7

Originally printed April, 2014

An “incurable optimist” is a label I’ve claimed for myself. What is an “incurable optimist”? It’s NOT anyone oblivious to surrounding realities; nor is it an ostrich with its head in the sand. It IS someone who has made a choice to dwell on possibilities and hope despite currently challenging circumstances.

Joining Henry Ford in his philosophy, “If you think you can, you can. If you think you can’t, you won’t,” is the reality of the function of the brain. When



starting with the assumption that something will work, the brain conjures up many possibilities of how to work it.

Conversely, when starting with the assumption that something will not work, the brain conjures up only obstacles to successful ideas. Nothing is wrong with pre-thinking contingencies and solutions to road blocks. However, dwelling on the impediments to success can lead to despair.

Despair is that dark dwelling where there is no light of hope.

My article in the March, 2011 issue of Groundcover discusses the depression of a young lady who descended into an attempt to commit suicide. Desperate to make a meaningful connection with a reason for living, purpose and hope, she was able to find that hope through counseling and the message of Christ’s love for her.

The optimism I have is because I have hope!!!

Meet Lit

by Ian Mark
U-M Student Contributor

Originally published December, 2014

Elizabeth Kurtz, or Lit (as she likes to be called) was born a part of the baby boomer generation, and grew up in Albion, Michigan. Later, she graduated from Eastern Michigan University and went into teaching, which she has been doing for all of her life. She has an adult son, having always been a single mother.

She taught at a couple of alternative education high schools in Connecticut for a few years, after which she returned to Michigan. In 1991, she lost her mother and her job within the span of a single year.

She was able to resume teaching up until September of 2012, when she lost her job. By February, she was evicted. At one point, she waited outside for 18 hours in the cold watching over her possessions to ensure they weren’t stolen. Since then, Lit has been unable to find stable housing. She spent some time at the Delonis Center, for which she is very grateful. Recently, she was able to access her pension and has been living in a hotel. “I don’t like that I had to cash my pension to survive, but I’m glad I had it,” she said.

Throughout it all, Lit has maintained a remarkable attitude, always looking on the bright side and making the best of her situation. She says a positive



by 2020, and she plans on starting an organization promoting early literacy and academic enrichment.

Lit also suffers from major depression. Her first episode was when she was thirty four. Thankfully, she is able to keep it well-controlled with medication, exercise and eating right. She also credits her faith in God, citing that she comes from a very strong religious background. She says that now she rarely has an episode.

Lit claims that Groundcover has been an absolute lifesaver for her, citing how it has given her and numerous other vendors a way to make an honest living. She was the first vendor to sell regularly at the YMCA and she has built up an admirable customer base there. She says it has given her the opportunity to talk to a lot of people about Groundcover News, poverty, homelessness and many similar issues. She’s very proud to be a vendor: “We’re working. Some of us work as vendors, some of us as writers, some of us as vendor-writers and we’re all proud of what we do. It’s a job and we work hard at it. We need to be considered a valued part of the community, because we are.

“Groundcover has afforded me a wonderful opportunity to begin writing, and I’m grateful for that. I will probably always consider this a job, in one form or another, whether I sell it as my sole means of income, on the side, or if I just sell it to ensure that there is a presence of Groundcover.”

Lit views her role as a vendor as very important, in representing individuals of different economic backgrounds and providing the community with an alternative news source. “There needs to be a presence even if people ignore us. There needs to be a presence so that we’re part of the collective consciousness of society, of the community.”

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover News is a nonprofit organization and newspaper vendors are considered contracted self-employers, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following list is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

All vendors must agree to the following code of conduct:

- Groundcover News will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$1, or the face value of the paper. I agree not to ask for more than face value or solicit donations by any other means.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover News.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover News Staff and will not sell

to or buy papers from other Groundcover News vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.

- I agree to treat all customers, staff and other vendors respectfully. I will not “hard sell,” threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover News under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover News but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover News and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover News.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.

If you see any Groundcover News vendors not abiding by the code of conduct, please report the activity to:
contact@groundcovernews.com
734-707-9210

attitude is “more freeing than debilitating.” Additionally, living without stable housing has had an effect on her spirituality. “This has been an extremely spiritual experience for me. Having my son and being homeless have been the two most spiritual experiences for me.”

In recent years, she has begun pursuing her passions, which include rapping and writing. As a lifelong English teacher, she is passionate about literature. Some of her favorite writers include Shakespeare and Hemingway. She keeps a blog where she can voice her opinions and express herself. An avid basketball player, Lit also makes it a point to stay active.

Lit admits that she can be overly ambitious at times. While learning to skateboard this July, she broke her wrist. However, she is still determined to get back to it. “Living on the streets has motivated me to do things differently.”

Her ambitions also extend to charity efforts. She’s a part of an organization which seeks to extend basic human rights to every individual in Michigan

Better days ahead with faith, friends and support

continued from page 4

*You don't know you're homeless
until you realize that the roof over
your head
is the stars and the moon
and your pet the raccoon.*

While sleeping in fields and under bridges, he made friends with Bandit the raccoon, a woodchuck and a skunk. During the early winter, he acquired a second sleeping bag from the lieutenant at the Salvation Army where he had been attending Bible Study classes and AA meetings. He prided himself on being the best bottle collector in Ann Arbor and was able to buy personal items with the proceeds.

On his bike one night looking for bottles, he was stopped by police for

not having a light on his bike. They arrested him on an outstanding warrant for non-payment from his business failure and he spent 6 months in the Macomb County jail, saving him from the most brutal part of winter. Released with nothing but his bike, he went to the nearest Salvation Army and stayed a few days. He found his stepson nearby and stayed with him for a month, during which time he attended AA meetings, felt depressed, and kept hearing Jesus-talk on TV. His son helped him get back to Delonis, where he got a blanket and returned to his old tent which Bandit had shredded in his absence. Luckily, he soon got a room at Delonis and substantial help from his caseworker, Cameron.

He regularly attends mass, AA meetings and a 12 Steps to God program, and his depression has lifted. Cameron helped him secure temporary work at the Art

Fair, and that 45 hours helped him get on his feet. He heard about Groundcover and got started selling papers as soon as the Art Fair ended. Along with saving most of his money for a down payment on an apartment, he bought some small presents for his granddaughter and sent some money to help with expenses.

Tony is so pleased to be substance-free and productive. "I lost my wife, who I love very much, and I have only myself to blame. I know I must move on, but be there for kids and the granddaughter who loves her Grand Pap and the baby grandson I have now! It's good to be clean. It's a great feeling. It's better to be looked up at than to be looked down at!

A minor setback befell him recently. His wallet fell from his pocket one hot Sunday morning as he was dragging his cart up Washtenaw on his way to sell

papers at an area church. (Buses don't run until later in the day on Sunday.) He resigned himself to losing the money that was in there, but fervently hopes to get his driver's license and personal papers back. If whoever has it drops the wallet in a mailbox or brings it to the Ann Arbor Police Department, it will make its way back to Tony.

He's looking forward to moving into his own place and saving enough money so he can finance karate lessons to enhance his granddaughter's self-discipline, get his ex-wife's car fixed, and repay an outstanding loan from his father-in-law. He says, "I'm happy. I've lost 12 pounds since I started selling the paper. I like what I'm doing – meeting people, showing them what a gentleman I am. I love saying 'Good morning' to people."

Can-do attitude strengthens Rissa's resolve

continued from page 3

Halfway through the projected six months of treatment she was feeling much better, though still wheelchair-bound. Her mother needed help, and Rissa returned to Michigan to take care of her. She arrived at the start of a brutal winter that kept her housebound for three months, during which time atrophy set in and all the gains she made in Texas were lost. She found a similar chiropractor and started over on the treatments.

That spring, she started losing control of her hands and went to the University of Michigan Hospital to see if it was connected to the problems with her legs. They found her blood sugar and thyroid levels were out of whack but could not come up with a clear diagnosis for the problems with her extremities. They worked on the symptoms and when they wanted to give her medications to avoid the deep vein thrombosis that often results from not walking, Rissa begged them instead to help her walk again. She got excellent physical

and occupational therapy that helped her make the transition to a walker.

Upon her release, she had nowhere to go. Her unemployment insurance had run out, her mother and brothers did not know how to cope with her as an invalid, and her son was a college student in Texas. Having been a caretaker all her life and never needing government help before, being dependent did not come easily to Rissa.

An excellent U-M social worker helped her apply for assistance and started the process of finding her permanent housing. Meanwhile, she was transferred to the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County facility – the Delonis Center. With no extra staffing at the shelter to accommodate special needs, Rissa had to adhere to the same rigid schedule as the rest of the residents. Tad and Marianne on the fourth floor helped her

as much as they could, but it took her nearly three hours just to get out of bed, wash, and get dressed. She was written up a couple of times for not leaving the floor on time, and it was difficult to get to meals on time, but she credits that push with making her stronger.

**"I believe you
have to bloom
where you are
planted."**

"I never would have chosen this way to go, but I am so glad I did because otherwise I never would have met so many blessed people. I believe you have to bloom where you are planted."

A member of the Delonis staff gave her a keyboard, which Rissa uses for finger limbering and making music, though she cannot play like she used to. Through positive thinking, hard work and good chiropractic care, Rissa has left the walker behind and now walks with the aid of a cane and can negotiate stairs slowly. She considers her work selling papers

as part of her therapy. It pushes her to move more and gives her a reason to go out, walk and talk with people. When she first started selling, she could not turn quickly enough to catch the attention of passersby. Now, she swivels from side to side, easily engaging pedestrians in conversation, and has built a loyal customer base.

She was enchanted with the idea of being a Groundcover vendor from the moment she first heard about it. In high school, she dreamed of owning her own business which she name "People's Enterprise."

"When you're your own boss, there's no floor, but there's also no ceiling," Rissa opines. "That's why I think Groundcover is so neat. There's no ceiling. Another thing I love about this paper is, you get to meet so many people!"

Rissa recently counseled another vendor, "Don't spend your energy on stuff you can't do nothing about. The past is gone; concentrate on the future!" She walks the walk that goes with the talk.

James "Joe" Woods, Vendor #103 workin' it

continued from page 7

month, but this is my income. So I take it seriously. This is my business."

Another topic we touched on was the personal aspect of selling papers out on the street. Like every basic human interaction, vendors are often judged based on appearance, as that is the information that comes across in the

time it takes to walk by. Because of the nature of the job, vendors are put in a position of vulnerability and necessary sociability that not many jobs require. An averted gaze can feel like a personal insult. And though Joe is adept at not taking the "no's" personally, that is a challenge that many vendors must overcome. Joe and I discussed this facet of being a Groundcover vendor, and although he is tough and seems to shake

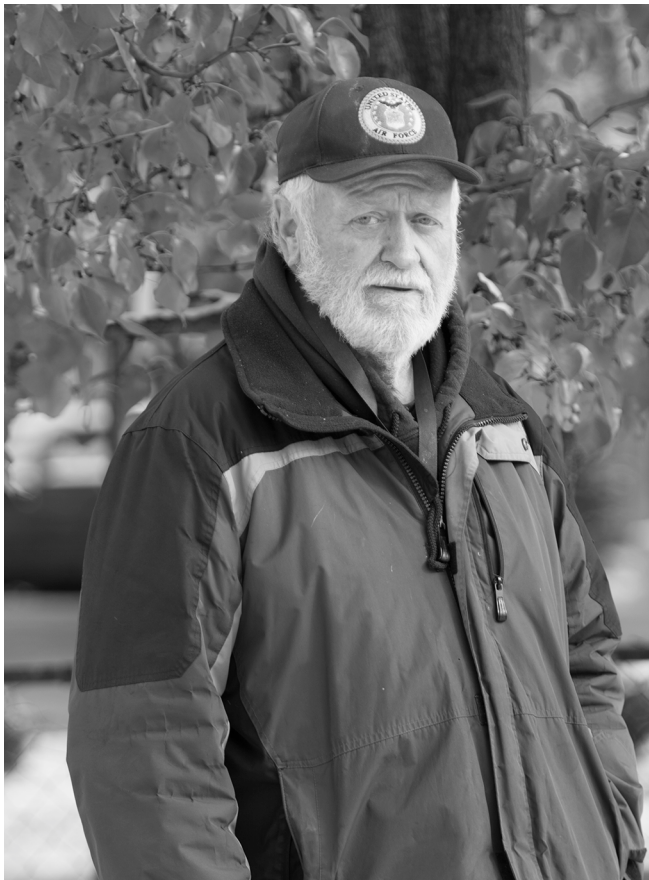
everything off, he does admit to having feelings on the matter.

"I know they think all kinds of crazy stuff about me. A lot of people see my outer appearance, and I'm pretty sure I get people who judge me by the way I dress, but if they stopped and got to talk to me they would see it's more than just my hat flipped to the back, or what I might wear that day. I want people to

know I am like a Transformer; there is more to me than meets the eye."

Joe sells on Liberty and Main in front of Cherry Republic, and on Liberty and Washington in front of the Bank of America. You can find him weekdays, between noon and six o'clock.

Meet veteran Hal Klenk, Vendor #88



by Susan Beckett

Originally published May, 2012

Hal Klenk started selling Groundcover a few months ago, but you may have recognized his curly silver hair from Vietnam Veterans Chapter 310, where he is very active. In part due to Hal's hard work, the chapter is the largest in the United States, was honored for having the best newsletter two years in a row, and won the award for the best president more than once. The chapter and Hal are now concentrating on how to transition the organization so

it becomes a legacy for veterans of more recent wars.

The armed services have played significant roles throughout Hal's life. He joined ROTC in 1962 as a freshman at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU), where it was a mandatory course. He joined the Air Force in 1964. Testing revealed that he had an aptitude for medicine, so he was sent to courses in anatomy and physiology and then on to medical lab courses. He served as a medical lab specialist for four years in Omaha, Nebraska.

Returning to Roseville to care for his ailing mother, Hal worked in hematology at Harper Hospital while attending Macomb Community College in pursuit of his Associates Degree. He subsequently took a nine-month leave from the hospital and returned to EKU, but had to get back to Harper Hospital before he could complete his degree program.

While working security at Selfridge Air Force Base, he felt the military calling to him again. The Air Force deemed him too old at 28 but the Army was happy to take him and station him in Germany, where he was able to continue his lifelong passion for play-

ing baseball. Hal played first base for the fast-pitch European Army team runner-up, recalling his glory days of winning the fireman's baseball league championship in 1961.

They once flew to Mannheim in a helicopter for a match. A major came running to the helipad behind the diamond as they landed, erect and ready to greet a general. He was not pleased to see only men in baseball uniforms!

Hal left the service in 1980 to take a ministry class from the Power of Abundant Living. He then led in-home fellowship meetings, nurturing a passion that still burns. He worked in private labs for doctors until he turned in a doctor for ordering unnecessary tests for Medicare patients and was fired. Soured on the medical field, he then worked odd jobs, drove a cab, and ultimately worked security for Pinkerton for ten years, living with and caring for his aged mother, who was suffering from dementia for the last five of those years.

When his mother died in 2000 and the family decided to sell her home, the stress led to a brief hospital stay for Hal. He was released to the New Day Baptist Shelter in Detroit, a place he was thankful to leave when an Army buddy offered him a place to stay in Saline. They both worked as drivers for Domino's and for Airlines Parking until the September 11 tragedy greatly curtailed air travel and led to their being laid off.

The Domino's job was insufficient to support him, so Hal, newly diagnosed

with diabetes, filed for a non-service military pension. That income allowed him to move into an efficiency apartment at the YMCA located across from the downtown library in Ann Arbor. Forced at age 62 to look for an apartment at market-rate when the YMCA was demolished, he filed for early Social Security then learned that he could get that or his military pension, but not both. Neither was sufficient to finance living in an apartment and paying other ordinary expenses.

He has been labeled by the Veterans Administration (VA) as "chronically homeless" for the past 10 years and put on the list for a Section 8 voucher. In the meantime, he lives at the Staples Center where the VA has rooms set aside for veterans for up to two years while they await permanent housing.

A big music fan, Hal sings in the church choir and hopes to someday learn to read music and play an instrument. He has a vision of a new and used non-profit car dealership run by veterans that would sell cars to vets at just above list price. For himself, he would like to be an ordained minister and work full-time, perhaps for the Methodists. He plans to soon join Toastmasters to improve his public speaking.

We are proud to salute Hal in our Memorial Day issue and support him in selling Groundcover.

(Note: as of fall of 2014, Hal is stably housed and recovering from a foot operation.)

A Super Birthday

Elizabeth S. Kurtz, aka "Lit"
Groundcover Vendor #159

Originally published June, 2014

Despite the stories of doom and gloom surrounding the issues of homelessness, there are some bright moments. I am having one right now.

After having lived on the streets for over a year, I have an opportunity to get into a more stable living environment. I have not slept in a bed for nearly 15 months, nor have I had a place where I can prepare a meal and sit down to eat. Ironically, it is all changing on the weekend of my birthday. As I turn 57 years old, I see that the number is doubled in that I was born in the year of 1957 – fifty-seven *deuce*. It seems as though all of the stars aligned to make something wonderful happen for me this month.

Would it were that simple. In retrospect, I understand that it did not hap-

pen on my own. Someone had an idea to make a street publication that provides an income to those on the street and beyond, and to keep the general public in the know about the experiences and challenges of those of us whose economic circumstances have been dealt a blow during life. Groundcover News, which is part of a larger group of street newspapers nationwide, is designed to report relevant news from the streets and afford anyone needing a ready income the opportunity to own an independent business while writing for and selling the paper.

Groundcover has grown progressively in Washtenaw County over four years. Susan Beckett introduced it to Ann Arbor following the blueprint of other street newspapers. All of this combined has enabled me to have hope that I can emerge from my challenging circumstances. Personally, through selling Groundcover, I have learned patience and discipline. I feel that I am the writer

that I always wanted to be, and I am building a base of customers who know and support me. It is, after all, a business – which means that I need to adhere to deadlines and follow rules and guidelines, and I set daily sales quotas for myself.

I have the opportunity to meet with wonderful people who have genuine concern about the issues regarding homelessness. When people ask me if I am looking for a teaching job, I respond that my new job will be teaching others about the effects of poverty and homelessness in

America. I will continue writing about how we can all work together to put homelessness in the past. Groundcover has offered me the opportunity to get my new life underway.

Ivers & Rickelmann, CPAs, PLLC
2929 Plymouth Road, Suite 350
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Phone (734) 994-7500
Fax (734) 994-0165

Thanks to GroundCover News for spreading the word and providing an outlet where there was none. We are proud to support your mission and good work!

Spare a dime or buy a paper



by Shelley DeNeve
Groundcover Vendor #32

Originally published July, 2011

I want to voice my observations and concerns about the difference between Groundcover News (GCN) vendors and panhandlers. Why is it so easy for the public just to hand a panhandler money? However, when a Groundcover vendor asks the general population to buy a paper, the same people say, "No, thanks." I want to point out something that happens all-too-often. As people are walking by, they suddenly are interrupted by a panhandler. While I

stand there with papers and watch the people give them money, I think to myself, "Why not buy from me? We are offering news and information in exchange for a \$1 donation."

Why are you giving to someone who wants a handout? What do they offer? I feel angry and frustrated when the public chooses them over me. I have talked to other vendors about this. Many of us feel it's unfair and it defeats our purpose. Most initially feel hurt or angry when this happens. For some, it leads to feeling depressed. Others channel

their reaction and conclude that the potential patron needs educating about the paper and its purpose, and set about trying to engage the person in conversation.

I sell Groundcover for three reasons. I need cash to buy everyday items my family needs, because the amount covered by food stamps isn't enough and both my husband and I are currently unemployed. Reason two, Groundcover is an essential part of our community in that it helps people understand what low-income and homeless people go through. Reason

three, I like talking with people and I feel like I'm doing something important while I look for another job.

For the record, *GCN vendors are not panhandlers*. This is a legitimate business! We may not sound as professional as a person with a regular job or higher education. We are just down-to-earth people trying to reestablish ourselves amidst a crisis in our lives. We also are serious about helping the public to reach a mindset of what GCN is all about. It's about helping the community become informed about poverty and homelessness in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and other areas in Washtenaw County. It is also about helping people in a homeless or housing-challenged situation by giving them an opportunity to sell GCN instead of asking for handouts. If I were the passerby, I would rather buy the paper from the vendor than just hand someone money. If I were rich, I would make a conscious effort to help both. It's ultimately up to you, the public, how you would like to help. Of course, you are reading this article, so you chose to buy the paper – thank you!

When you give a panhandler money, do you wonder where your money goes to? We can only guess, right? When you buy GCN from the vendor, it goes to that specific vendor. The vendors buy papers from GCN at 25 cents per copy. Then the vendor sells the publication

for a dollar. We have to organize, plan and coordinate our sales efforts. We are not just asking for a handout; we are asking for a hand up (with the \$1.00 donation, of course!). Why do many people say "no, thank you" to GCN vendors? Does the public think we are like panhandlers? I get that impression a lot!

When I go out and sell GCN on the weekends, it is really difficult to sell. I don't know if it's the mindset of the crowd, or because some of the crowd are visitors and feel uncomfortable about buying it. Another crowd I find hard to reach is the younger people, whether or not they are students. I know they're busy with school and other activities – but is it partly because they have an agenda to party all night? I just want to say we need more college-aged people buying GCN. You are our future, and this is something that needs your attention. I want to reiterate that GCN vendors are legitimate business people.

In conclusion, I want to say that I appreciate your business and thoroughly enjoy talking with the public. Just to let you know, I can't talk too long since people are passing by and I may miss an opportunity to open another person's heart and mind. Thank you for your generosity and thoughtful comments on how GCN and its vendors are conducting their business.

Meet Fred, Vendor #170

by Sue Budin
Groundcover Contributor

Originally published October, 2014

Fred Allen grew up in Ann Arbor and graduated from Pioneer High School in 1977. His father worked as a mechanic at a car dealership and at the University of Michigan. His mother was a homemaker, taking care of him and three other siblings. After graduating from Pioneer, Fred worked construction, had some landscaping jobs, and worked at restaurants, most recently at the Parthenon, the Greek restaurant that is now Lena's. He never married.

Almost three years ago, Fred had one of two strokes. He was standing in the driveway of the Raja Rani Restaurant, feeling woozy and light-headed. He was taken to the U-M Hospital and was released after a week. The next day, he had another stroke and returned to the hospital for three weeks, then was sent to a nursing home for special I.V. treatments.



Despite these setbacks, Fred remains upbeat. He has free housing as part of an agreement with a family who owns some property he helps take care of. Contrary to common public misperception, he, like some other vendors, is not homeless but subsists on very low income. Other vendors often need to work additional part-time jobs, but because of Social

Security Disability payments and his housing/job arrangement, Fred does not have to depend entirely on selling Groundcover or other work to meet his expenses. Although vendors make \$.75 on each paper that sells for a dollar, and some sell

many papers, it's still barely enough to meet subsistence needs.

Fred started selling papers last November and does it "to get out of the house." He's met some interesting people, including one of U-M's star basketball players, Jordan Morgan,

who sold papers with him and other vendors last winter. Just yesterday, a woman sang him a song on her ukulele.

One of Fred's regular outposts is Friends' Meeting House on Hill St., where he's met some very kind people including a nun visiting from Nigeria who was eager to learn about Groundcover. He also sells papers on Main St. and sometimes in front of the People's Food Co-op. Some merchants don't want vendors outside their doors, thinking it will discourage customers, but Fred has an easygoing attitude, just moving to another spot where he knows he'll be welcomed. He says Groundcover needs more vendors who would sell papers in Pittsfield Township and Ypsilanti.

As to the future, Fred hopes to get another part-time job while continuing his work as a caretaker and vendor. Fred says, "It's fun selling" – a great attitude for a successful vendor who cares and is cared for by the generous people who buy his papers.

YOUR CURRENT VENDORS



Miriam L. #6



Eddy P. #32



Rissa H. #8



Hal K. #88



Sierra R. #213



Tony S. #9



John M. #220



Fred A. #170



Joe W. #103



Shelley D. #22



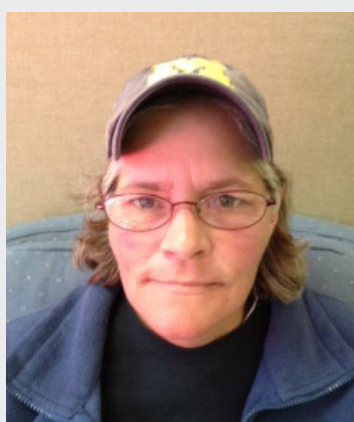
Lonnie B. #99



Robert S. #17



Mansel W. #96



Peggy D. #98



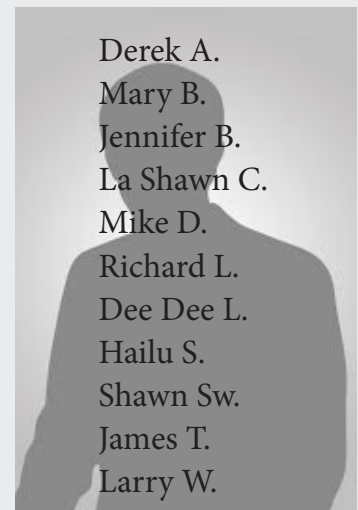
Paula A. #157



Lit K. #159



Shawn S. #42



Not pictured



George B. #179



Schillington M. #148